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Diary of Cecile Murat



DIARY OF
CECILE MURAT

A Story of Saint Mary's Bay
from
1795 to 1825



by J. ALPHONSE DEVEAU

DIARY

OF CECILE MURAT

November 22, 1795:

Today my "papa" gave me this little book with a blue cover and pages so white and said to me: "To my dear little girl for her fifteenth birthday." Then he kissed me tenderly on the forehead.

I looked at the book, surprised, and blurted out: "What should I write in that?"

"Why, the doings and pretty little thoughts of Cecile Murat."

Cecile Murat, well — that is nobody but me. My "papa" is Casimir LeBlanc with whom I am living in a little house at the foot of the hill at Church Point. (1)

He is not really my "papa", but he has been more than a father to me. And if I am able to write these few lines legibly, it is with thanks to him, for very few people in this village are able to read and write.

However, isn't it strange that I am the only Murat of the "Point"? In fact, I believe that I am the only Murat along St. Mary's Bay.

"Mama" LeBlanc, whose name is Martha, has taught me a lot, too. Thanks to her I can cook, sew and knit with the coarse wool that we have. I can even make myself a dress. That is not too difficult, for the dresses worn by young girls like me are very simple and of coarse cloth. In fact, everything is coarse and simple and poor around here, people, houses and clothes.

My "mama" has also taught me a great deal about our religion. She is a very religious person, having lived for many years in a convent in France while her husband, whom I call my "papa", was in the French navy.

How nice it would be to live in a convent where there is mass every day. It has been so long since we had a mass around here that many of my little girl friends do not know what it is. We do have prayers, that people call "messe blanche," in the little church on the Point (2). That is why this village is called Church Point. These gatherings for prayers are better than nothing, but it does not satisfy me at all.

Every Sunday, in the forenoon, the people of the village wend their way to the little church, which is really nothing but a cabin, and there Casimir leads us in singing the Kyrie, the Gloria, the Credo; and we recite the rosary.

After it is over we return home by the path leading to the "chemin du roi" (king's highway). Some laugh and gossip (how the women can gossip about their neighbours!) while others, the older men, are silent and sad. No doubt they are thinking of former times and former homes. I have heard that they have been asking for a priest for many years, but without success.

But right now what puzzles me is why I am the only one of my family here and why I have neither brothers nor sisters, neither cousins, nor uncles, nor aunts, like all my little companions have. Where are my real mother and father? Why does Casimir and Martha LeBlanc speak a slightly different French than our neighbours? I must ask them.

So my dear diary, I close you until I find the answer to these questions that are bothering me.

(1) Casimir LeBlanc's house was situated near the house now owned by Joseph Stuart at Church Point.

(2) There is a little chapel on the site of this small church near the lighthouse at Church Point.

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December 1, 1795:

Last night, beside the flaming fireplace, Casimir told me the story of my life and of his. I am going to try to tell it as I heard it.

Casimir was born in Pisiquit (a strange name, isn't it?) Like all the young men at that time, he worked on his father's farm, hunted, and trapped. At twenty he married Martha Daigle, and with his father's help cleared himself a farm of his own at the edge of the village.

Forty years ago this year, at the end of the summer's harvest, Casimir, along with the other men of the village, was summoned to Fort Edward by the English commander and never returned to his home. A few days later, two soldiers came and told Martha to come along with them and bring what she could. She and the other women of the village were herded to the fort, but at least she was reunited with her husband. Others were not as fortunate and many husbands and wives were separated forever by this cruel uprooting.

Then they were placed aboard an old ship and sailed many days on the ocean. During the long voyage many died of sickness and grief. However, some hoped that they would be left on the shores of France. Great was their grief when they learned that their destination was Liverpool, England.

However, fate took a hand here and as they neared the English Channel, a French privateer captured the British ship and took it and its unwilling passengers to St. Malo.

Casimir was so grateful to this privateer that he resolved to join its crew as soon as he could provide for the safety of his wife. At St. Servan, Martha entered a convent, and Casimir returned to St. Malo where he "shipped" aboard the same privateer that had rescued him. This was his undoing for he was soon captured and landed in an English jail. There, he met a young fellow countryman, Pierre Murat, with whom he struck up a lasting friendship.

Casimir explained to me that England and France were at war then, over a piece of land in some far-off country, Austria, I believe he said. It seemed that a king named Frederick of Prussia had taken a province, Silesia, from a queen, Maria Theresa; and now Maria Theresa was trying to get it back. France had helped Frederick to get this province before, and now was helping Maria Theresa to get it back. Countries do such silly things and fight just as little boys do. I will never understand either.

At the end of the war, Casimir returned to France, broken in health, and spent some time in a hospital in Paris. After many months he returned to St. Servan to his beloved Martha.

At St. Servan, Casimir could find nothing to do, and hearing that there was a chance to return to Acadia with the fishermen of Jersey Island, Martha and Casimir moved there. Casimir made many voyages to the banks off Acadia, and finally brought Martha to Arichat, where they settled.

Neither one was too happy there and when they learned that it was possible for the Acadians to obtain grants of land along St. Mary's Bay, Casimir came by fishing boat to look over the situation. He liked the place and found many friends from Pisiquit and Grand Pre.

He immediately decided to stay. He joined the second group of Acadians returning from Massachusetts and obtained a grant of 280 acres at Church Point. Since then he has prospered.

I'm too saddened now by the story of my own family to continue.

December 8, 1795:

I finally got back enough courage to keep on. **But the** story that Casimir told me is so sad that I do not know where to begin.

I believe I should start with the events that preceded my arrival here.

After the war my father went back to sea and become a sea captain, master of his own ship. He traded at first with the West Indies. Then, when France sent supplies to the American colonies, my father entered that trade and decided to settle in Boston with my mother, Françoise. They left Bayonne, France in the fall of 1780. When they arrived in Boston, Pierre Murat's family had increased by one, me, for I was born at sea, on November 22nd, the feast of Saint Cecilia, (hence my name).

I do not remember much about my stay in Boston except that mother always seemed sad when my father was not with us. I do remember (I believe I was six years old) that father arrived one day from a voyage looking happier than I had ever seen him on his arrival.

"I have found Casimir!" he exclaimed.

"Who?" inquired mother, surprised.

"A great friend from France who was in the service with me."

"Where is he? Why did you not bring him with you?"

"He is in Church Point, in Nova Scotia. He invited us to go there. He wants us to share his wealth and his property."

Some time after this, father took me aboard his ship and we left mother behind with my little sisters, Fanny, Polley, and the baby, Soukie. I still remember how Fanny and Polley cried to be allowed to come with us, while the baby slept peacefully in all the upset of departure.

It was my second voyage at sea, although I do not remember the first. Everything seemed so strange; the splashing of the waves, the spray on the decks, the fluttering of the sails, the creaking pulleys, the screaming ropes.

Then came the St. Mary's Bay fog. This fog, damp, cold and almost always there, greeted me that day and has stayed with me since.

Finally through the mist, appeared "l'Ile a Seraphin", that I have learned to like, for it is there that landed the first inhabitants of Church Point.

We did not land there, however. Instead we chose to land at that point of land, with its little church perched at the edge, at its own risk.

There was a large crowd of people there, all poorly dressed and accompanied by many children. But my attention was soon held by an older couple who came to meet us. Father carried me to them, and thrust me in the arms of the lady while he embraced the man, shouting: "My good Casimir, my good Casimir". I guessed the woman was Madame LeBlanc, and I felt attached to them right away.

A week later my father sailed for Boston. He was to return in two weeks bringing mother and my sisters. I was to remain with the LeBlanc's as Casimir and father had agreed that it would be useless to expose me again to the dangers of the sea.

From the tip of the point of land I waved to the vanishing ship while Madame LeBlanc tried to dry my tears and comfort me, saying:

"Do not cry, my dear little one, he will be back in a few days."

Nevertheless I wept a long while that night. To make me feel worse, a storm raged outside, and I could hear the huge waves breaking on the shore.

Every day for three weeks, I went to the end of the point to see if I could catch the glimpse of a ship. But each day I returned crying, and was comforted by Madame LeBlanc. One day, I noticed the LeBlanc's were crying with me. I understood I would never see my father again. The storm had taken him and his crew.

My mother and my sisters remained in Boston. The LeBlancs have offered to bring me back to Boston but Mother has taken such a dislike for the sea that she wrote to the LeBlancs to keep me here, and so I feel I belong here and they look upon me as their very own. I am so happy with them. Mother has stopped writing to me, not for lack of affection, but to make it easier for me to give all my love to Casimir and Martha LeBlanc, and I do love them so. Yet how I long to see my dear mother and my

sweet little sisters! When I asked my new "papa" Casimir to go to Boston, his eyes filled with tears. I do not want to cause him any grief, so I shall never ask him again.

1. The real names of Cecile's sisters were Francoise, Pauline and Marguerite-Sophie.

December 25, 1795:

Noel, Noel; a word which should be full of joy, and yet today I'm so sad. "Mama" LeBlanc has explained to me what this feast was like in former days. She spoke to me of the midnight mass, of the adoration by the shepherds, of the Infant Jesus in the Manger. Here we have nothing; no priest, no mass. We have recited the rosary and sung Christmas hymns and that was it.

People are begging for a priest, but nobody seems to answer their prayers. Our last priest was Father Phelan. However, it seems that no one liked him and that he had made every effort not to be liked.

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New Year's Day, 1796:

Today I feel happier. We had a huge "rappie pie". This is the dish that the Acadians prefer above all. It is easy to make and so very satisfying. All that you need are potatoes, pork, fresh meat and salt. It is good with any meat, and also with clams (very delicious) but most often people use fowl. In this one we had the meat from three wild ducks brought to us by "Janie" Melanson. He is a fine young man who often calls on Casimir.

I asked Casimir about this "pate-a-la-rapure" as I was curious to know how it came about. It seems the Acadians, on their return from exile, had nothing but potatoes as staple food. They discovered that by grating the potatoes and extracting the starch they were made more palatable and you could make a limited quantity of meat go farther. The starch then can be used for our clothes.

Casimir believes this became a dish out of necessity. This is how we make this dish!

First of all you cut your fowl in pieces, cover with water and cook it. It is better to add finely chopped onions. Peel, wash and grate potatoes, noting how much you have in your pan. Squeeze potatoes in a cotton bag, about two cups at a time until quite dry. Pack in a bowl. — When potatoes are all squeezed, loosen them up in a large pan. Add boiling broth from fowl, gradually, and stirring slowly. If there is not enough broth, add boiling water until you have as much potato mixture as before they were squeezed. Add salt and pepper to taste. We spread half of this mixture evenly over the bottom of a large tin pan, then put the meat over this layer of potato then cover the meat with the rest of the potato mixture. The pan is then placed in the hot oven by the chimney for two hours.

January 6, 1796:

This feast of the Kings, or Epiphany, is a happy feast with us. I have just returned from a party at the Melanson's where we had the "Kings' Cake". And it is I who caught the ring. What a pleasant dream! Why am I so delighted?

Well, first let me tell you about this famous cake. It is a molasses cake in which you put a ring, a bean, a silver coin and a nut. It is cut at the evening meal of the feast of Epiphany and whoever gets the ring will be the first to get married. The person who gets the bean is the king of the feast. The lucky person who gets the coin will become rich. The nut seems to be there for a laugh.

Easter 1796:

This morning I got up before sunrise to see the sun "dance". It is a belief that the sun moves crazily in the sky when it is just at the horizon. Most everybody gets up early to get a glimpse of this and also to get Pascal water, that is water taken from a spring at sunrise on Easter morning. This water is kept religiously until the following Easter. It is said to have the blessing of God upon it. Every household sees to it that it has its bottle of Pascal water. It is our holy water for the sick and the dying, and we use it at burials. We do not have the real holy water for we have no priest to bless it. It also may cure illness.

Alas, another great feast of the church and no priest! We again had a "white mass". However, things are beginning to move. A number of men met here last week and asked Casimir to write a petition to Governor Wentworth,

to ask him to obtain a priest for us. He did so, and will take it to Halifax this week.

Fifty-six householders signed it, or rather put their "cross" to it, for only fourteen of them could write their name. It's a sad state of affairs, but it is not surprising for they have had no chance to learn since 1755.

May 1, 1796:

My "papa" LeBlanc has come back from Halifax, very satisfied with his meeting with the governor. The latter has told him: "The Acadians are loyal, honest, and are worthy British subjects. It is a great pleasure for me to see that these sentiments have proven themselves under my administration. I consider them the most faithful subjects of His Majesty."

Let us hope that this request is more successful than the others. My "papa" reports that Father Jones, an Irish priest in Halifax, is also working hard to find us a priest.

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June 2, 1796:

Today I went fishing far from shore in Saint Mary's Bay. The sea was so very smooth and I was not the only girl out fishing today. In fact, it is not uncommon for Acadian women to take their place in the fishing boats of their husbands or their brothers. In my case it was not a brother but "Janie" Melanson. I wonder if I will succeed better in catching a husband than I did in catching fish?

Tonight I asked "papa" Casimir about the Melanson family and this is what he told me.

This family came originally from Scotland and bore the name Mellensen. Peter Mellensen came to Port-Royal from Boston, so it seems, during the years that Acadia was the domain of Sir William Alexander, who changed the name to Nova Scotia. Peter married Marie Mius d'Entremont, accepted our religion and our language, and his family adopted the name Melanson. Peter Melanson and Peter Terriot were the founders of Grand Pre. In 1755 they were taken to Boston and returned about fifteen years later to Saint Mary's Bay. (I'm so glad they did).

June 24, 1796:

To-day, the feast of Saint John the Baptist, is a double feast for me. First of all, it is the feast of a saint whose name I love, for it is my "Janie's" real name. Then the brig "Harnah", captain Pierre Doucet, has cast anchor off Church Point. The arrival of the "Hannah" is always a gay occasion for this village and its neighbouring hamlets, Grosses-Coques, Belliveau's Cove and Little Brook.

They unloaded a great deal of cargo from Boston, ever cloth of high quality ordered especially for me by my dear "papa" and "mama" LeBlanc. It appears that the men of the village are in for a gay old time, for I saw many rum barrels rolled on the beach. Our Acadians seem to like this liquor too much.

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June 25, 1796:

Capt. Pierre Doucet has personally come to bring me a letter from Mother. Dear little diary, how happy I am today! I cried and laughed at the same time. I was so glad to hear that she is well and so are my little sisters, although they do not like the puritan atmosphere of Boston.

They would all like to return to France, to the sunny and smiling land of Bordeaux. But mother hesitates to undertake the long sea voyage, and furthermore she's afraid of bringing back her daughters to the native land, for a terrible revolution is going on.

She learned that King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette were guillotined. The Dauphin has disappeared and thousands of people have perished. Apparently we are lucky to be here after all.

"Papa" LeBlanc received a letter from one of his friends from France, who is now living in Philadelphia. His name is Moreau de Saint-Mery. He reports that many nobles and other people who have had relations with nobles, fearing for their lives, have left the country and taken refuge either in England or America. This Moreau de Saint-Mery chose the United States. I believe he did well.

In his letter he tells about his escape from France with a young man that he took for a priest, a non-jurer, in other words, one who would not swear to the new constitution of France, that made the Church subject to the State. It seems to him that this fellow's name was "Sigogne" (Stork), a strange name for a priest.

Be that as it may, this young man stayed in England while Moreau, who does not like England, took the first ship to the United States and reached Philadelphia, a city that Moreau had grown to know through a man he had met in Paris, a fellow named Benjamin Franklin. Many fugitives from France are already there. Casimir has been thinking of inviting some of them to Church Point. How wonderful it would be to meet some charming young man from France !

Now, why am I talking like that ? My heart belongs to "Janie" Melanson.

October 13, 1796:

If this handwriting is uneven, it is because I'm still shaky from fright. We had the most terrifying experience last night.

We had gone to sleep peacefully, as usual, when masked, armed men entered the house. That's not hard to do because the doors are never locked. Nobody does so around here. It is unheard of. These scoundrels pulled us out of bed and dragged us before the fireplace. They started up the fire, and threatened to burn us if we did not tell where Casimir had put the money that he had received for horses sold to the Loyalists at Digby two days ago. When their threats failed to make us talk, one of the thieves ripped the shirt from Casimir's back. Another shoved a spade into the embers, and when it was good and hot applied it to Casimir's back. Not a word did he utter, but I screamed my head off until one of these ruffians slapped me so hard that I fell down.

However, this seemed to unnerve them and they grabbed what they could and were rushing out of the door when Marc, a young dim-wit living with us, called their attention to a bolt of cloth hidden behind the sofa. The three hesitated an instant, then seized the cloth and fled.

A few moments later, people from the village, among them Janie and his father, arrived on the run. How happy I was to see them ! But I quickly ran to my room, for I knew I wasn't a pretty sight after having been bruised and shoved by these scoundrels.

The villagers started after the thieves, but the latter made good their escape with our precious possessions. But they got no money for it had already been spent.

I wanted to slap Marc for telling about the cloth. But the poor boy isn't too bright, and he thought he was doing the right thing. He feared, so he says, that these thieves would return unless they got everything. Nevertheless, I was so mad that I pushed him and he fell into a barrel of water we have by the door.

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November 22, 1796:

What a celebration we had today! It seems to me that all the people of the village came here to wish me a happy birthday and leave me a gift. However these gifts were not all for me. There were some also for the family.

This makes me feel how much this little community is just like one big family. My birthday was but an occasion for them to make up for the damages done to my parents by the bandits. We now have plenty to pass the winter through. (Always a difficult time in this area).

Then my "papa" let us have a real party. We danced and we danced. We danced this new dance called "French eights", although it is not a French dance at all, but comes to us from New England.

Strange, isn't it, that of all the folk dances of old France, none have been preserved by these people. But, after all, when you think about it, the long years of the Expulsion were not conducive to dancing. The people had to work so hard and there was little time nor spirit for merry making. And so the dances must have been forgotten and lost then.

What fun! Pitre Theriault played the fiddle as if he were possessed and everybody was laughing, singing, and having a good time.

I think I danced with all the boys of the village. But now I recall only those with "Janie". I noticed he left all the other girls aside to dance with me.

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Christmas, 1796:

Today we went to the little chapel on the "Point" for a "white mass". Everybody joined in singing the Kyrie, the Gloria and Christmas hymns, led by Casimir. Of course, we have no organ. The only music that we hear there is the murmur of the waves striking the shore at the foot of the cliffs.

I fear that someday the poor little chapel will fall from the cliffs to the gravel below. It shakes in the wind, whistling through the joints of the boards. This makes it difficult to pray with attention. Today, however, the wind was calm and snow blocked all the joints. It was so crowded, that in spite of the fact that there is no heat in it, everyone was almost suffocating.

Returning from the chapel, I found "La Coueche", whose real name is Madeleine, wife of Charles-Marin Belliveau, struggling through the deep snow.

The poor lady ! I asked Casimir about her and he told me this story, which I'll write here as I heard it.

When Pierre LeBlanc and Francois Doucet arrived at the "Ile a Seraphin", in 1771, the men, the women, and the children began to cry, discouraged by the sight of the thick forest before them, and by the memory of all they had lost — land, homes, and loved ones. Then Madeleine, daughter of Pierre LeBlanc, grabbed an axe that one of the men had dropped and tackled the first tree, saying: "We have wept enough; let's set about building a shelter for the night."

Encouraged by this action, the men started to chop trees, the children to gather branches, and the women to prepare bedding and food. A shelter was quickly put up. Courage returned and has never left this people since.

Casimir also told me he had been a witness to the marriage of Madeleine's older sister, Elizabeth, born on a Boston wharf, on November 25, 1755. In 1779, she married Sylvain Pothier, now of Tusket Wedge. (1)

The last priest to pass through here authorized Casimir to receive the marriage vows and he has received so many. I hope it will not be long before he receives mine, for already some of my friends are married.

(1) Tusket Wedge — now Wedgeport. By a strange coincidence, the son of this Sylvain Pothier, also named Sylvain, married Marie, second daughter of Cecile and Janie Melanson.

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February 15, 1797:

Today we had the funeral of Charles Melanson. **Death** is always a sad event, but doubly so here because the village is like a large family and every family shares the sorrow that befalls the stricken ones.

The body is kept as long as possible at home, in a coffin made of rough boards. Then it is carried to the little chapel on the "Point" where we recite the Service for the Dead, a slow and plaintive chant in Latin. The event is saddened by the mournful appearance of the "Point" itself and of the chapel, gray and weather-beaten, without even a bell to toll the dirge. The funeral procession wends its way painfully on the path to the cemetery. Six men carry the closed coffin on their shoulders, followed by relatives, all in tears and weeping aloud. The women, their faces half-covered by large black veils which fall on their shoulders, recite the rosary for the deceased. The men follow, holding their leather caps in their hands.

One lady carries a small vase of "pascal water" (1) and a small fir branch. At the newly-dug grave, she sprays the water on the coffin and on the mound of earth and then passes it from hand to hand and each one pays tribute to the dead by doing the same and saying "May he rest in peace".

(1) Water from a spring fetched on Easter morning before sunrise, a custom previously described by Cecile.

Easter, 1797:

I have some more sad news to write here, "Mama" LeBlanc is very sad for Casimir has left us. He has sailed for Antigua, with Captain Pierre Doucet, aboard the brig "Hannah" in order to seek permanent markets for the products of Saint Mary's Bay. He will be gone all summer. I believe he said he would stop at Philadelphia on the way back, to see some of his acquaintances from France who have settled there since the start of the Revolution. He will also stop at Boston to see mother and my sisters.

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November 22, 1797:

Today is my luckiest day! First of all, it is my birthday. "Papa" LeBlanc has just returned from his long trip with many lovely things for me, and a letter from mama with a few lines from each of my sisters. But that's not all! Imagine! A handsome young man, Pierre Paradis, has arrived with Casimir. Casimir met him at Moreau de St. Mery's. He is from Bourdeaux, native land of the Murats!

I would have liked it so much if mama and my sisters, Fanny, Polley and Soukie, could have come too; but alas, mother does not want to venture on the ocean, unless it is

to return to France. This, she plans to do as soon as conditions in that country are more favourable. She tells me to be very obedient to the LeBlancs and to respect them as if they were my real parents. I am going to write to tell her that is not hard to do. They are so good to me.

I just wonder what effect the arrival of Pierre Paradis will have on Janie. Will it make him jealous. I believe he loves me but he does not say so. I wish he would !

* * * * *

Christmas, 1797:

We have just finished the "rappie pie" dinner. This morning, we all went to church on the "Point", if such a building can be called a church. And, was it ever cold ! And snow to our knees ! Pierre Paradis almost perished from both. He is still shivering.

It seems to me that he has a good deal of disdain for our poor customs, but he must understand that this is our way of life. I hope he will take to them as much as I did and be happy with us.

Poor young man, he is warming up his insides with rum from the West Indies. Naturally he finds it a poor substitute for the wines of his native country. While I am writing this, I glance in his direction. How tall and straight he is ! No doubt the hard toil of our young men bends and shortens their "frames", for one can see that Pierre has never toiled with the ax or the saw. He says he can handle a sword with the best of them, but that will be of little use to him here.

Epiphany, 1798:

I believe that all the young people of the village were here tonight. We sang and danced as we never did before. Never have I seen such spirit. It seems that our people are awakening, and it seems that I am awakening to something wonderful.

Alas, however, this year I was not the lucky finder of the ring in the cake. Madeleine Doucet was the lucky girl. They say she will soon be married to Joseph Comeau.

Janie Melanson seems to avoid me now.

* * * * *

Easter, 1798:

Now I know why Pierre Paradis came here. It is for the same reason that papa came. Casimir wants him as his heir. I also believe he wants me to marry him.

But alas, Casimir's plans always seem to be blocked by a cruel fate. Pierre is fed up with Saint Mary's Bay. He wants to return to Philadelphia and take me with him. Must I follow him? Is my love for him strong enough to allow me to leave my benefactors just at the time they need me the most? I wish Janie would be more ardent. I leave you here my dear diary, without an answer.

* * * *

May 26, 1798:

He is gone! Three little words that mean a great deal. Yes, today Pierre Paradis has sailed away with Captain Doucet in the "Hannah".

It would have been too wonderful but it couldn't be. My place is here. My heart tells me so; and yet, my mind tells me I should have gone with him. Who knows?

"Mama" LeBlanc is smiling now for the first time in weeks, and Casimir appears pleased and sad at the same time.

Pierre will stop first at Boston where he will deliver a letter to mama from me, and to Docteur Montigny from Casimir, begging him to find us a priest from among the clergy driven from France by the Revolution. Let's hope this attempt will bring results.

* * * *

November 1, 1798:

What cruel fate dogs our efforts! We were awaiting the return of Captain Doucet and his ship for news from Pierre Paradis and from Dr. Montigny. Yesterday, some fishermen from Grand-Passage brought us the sad news. The Hannah struck a reef and the bodies of Captain Doucet and his crew were washed ashore.

Shall we ever know the results of our requests for a priest, and will I ever hear from Mama again?

July 21, 1799:

What news! What news!

We were at Joseph Dugas' at Grosses Coques yesterday when he arrived! Who? Why, the priest that we have been awaiting for so long! He is Father Sigogne. The same one that Moreau de Saint-Mery mentioned in his letters.

The first thing he did on arriving was to give us his blessing. What joy! We were all so happy we felt like shouting and weeping at the same time.

He appears very weak and thin but his eyes reveal great strength of soul. He already has our affection and our loyalty. He told us he had left England on the 14th of April and arrived in Halifax on June 12. From Halifax he was taken by a fishing boat to Tusket (now Sainte-Anne-du-Ruisseau). From there he walked here in two weeks.

* * * * *

The last Sunday of July, 1799:

A memorable date for me and for many others along the French Shore, as it is often called, for today we had a real Mass. The little church could not hold half the people that flocked from everywhere, from "Up the Bay", down to Salmon River. There were all kinds of dress — and there were even Indians, all drawn here by the presence of Father Sigogne. How fortunate we are! Now, we'll have a priest to marry us, if ever Janie asks me!

September 30th, 1799:

Last week, two of my girl friends went to Saint John and when they came back to the envy of all of us, they had hats, real hats, bought in a store. This is unheard of for us. Here, women and girls wear only black kerchiefs when they go to church.

Last Sunday these two girls dared to wear their hats to church, although they were warned not to do so. Father Sigogne took one long look at the hats as he came to the altar but said nothing then. He waited till the sermon and then the feared words flowed from his lips. He told these two that they should be ashamed to despise the honoured kerchiefs of their mothers, and to break a venerated tradition of the parish.

I really did want a hat myself until then, but I do so no longer. I'll keep on wearing my kerchief. Many of the girls are miffed by the words of the priest. But the older women are happy that their cherished black kerchiefs have been thus maintained in their honoured position.

October 5, 1799—

Today I really have news to confide to my diary.

The whole parish is buzzing with gossip.

Father Sigogne has gone over to Sainte-Anne-du-Ruisseau and in his absence a young man and a young girl who are first cousins went to Weymouth to get married before a Protestant minister. Everybody is awaiting impatiently

the return of Father Sigogne, to see what he will say and do.

Some fear that if he does nothing, it will be the beginning of many such scandals. In spite of the fact that the good Father is dearly beloved by most, there are some who hate his high-handed manner of doing things, and his strict rules. Moreover, one of our Acadians, who has abandoned his faith, is trying to induce all of us to follow him.

* * * * *

The third Sunday of November, 1799—

I am still shocked by the events at mass today. Father Sigogne was back and could scarcely contain his anger. He had learned about the incident of the marriage of Jacques and Marie. There is no lack of gossipers among the Acadians.

As far as I remember this is what he said:

“There is a former parishioner sowing seeds of discord in the area, in the form of false accusations against me and the ridicule of our holy religion.”

Then he attacked the guilty ones.

“I declare that the marriage of Jacques and Marie (1) is void before God and before man. I command you two and all those who took part in this mockery of our faith to immediately leave the church and not to return.”

Thereupon the young couple left, and so did the parents, aunts and uncles of the bride.

(1) Names are fictitious, but not the incident.

The third Sunday of November, 1799—

Today we witnessed an unforgettable scene at church. The couple whom Father Sigogne had forbidden to enter church two weeks ago, came and knelt before the altar, and asked forgiveness for the scandal they had caused. The priest, in his sacred vestments, came to them and pronounced this extraordinary sentence: “For the reparation of the scandal you have caused, you will assist at mass, on Sunday and on Feast Days, at the door of the church, the girl with a white kerchief on her head, the young man with a white kerchief around his neck. You will continue to do so for seven years unless I or my successor rescind the penance.”

What a terrible warning to those who might have had the same intentions! Let's hope the good priest will soften the penance.

June 2, 1800—

I am now Mrs. Jean-Baptiste Melanson! We were married yesterday before Father Sigogne. We are so happy and everything is so rosy.

Janie had worked all winter in the woods and he felt he had enough to start our household, so he dared approach Casimir and "mama" LeBlanc to ask for my hand. The answer was not long in coming, on their part and on mine.

After having paid the honorarium for the mass, which the good Father has fixed at a shilling, we had ten pounds sterling and three shillings.

Janie thinks that is all we have, but I have a surprise for him. I bring a dowry of a hundred and fifty pounds sterling from the LeBlancs, and all their property at their death.

However, weddings are not what they used to be here before the arrival of Father Sigogne. Now the girls must dance in one room and the boys in another room. Can you imagine that! I believe many young people did not enjoy my wedding because of that.

* * * * *

June 1801—

Finally I find a moment to write down a few thoughts. But now with a husband and a baby, I will have little time for my diary.

Our first-born was baptized today by Father Sigogne. Our Armand was the first baptized at the new baptismal fount that our priest has made himself. He learned the trade of cabinet maker while he was in exile in England, and he has used this skill to repair our humble church.

Yes, we do have a son, a darling little boy, who resembles, I believe, the Melansons. If he has any Murat features, I do not know. Mama could tell me if she could see him.

I am going to write to tell her the great news. I hope the letter reaches her before she leaves for France, for in her last letter she intended to leave for Bayonne, France, where she has inherited some property. She also mentioned that my uncle Joachim, papa's younger brother, is a cavalry general in the French army and has married Caroline Marie-Annonciade Bonaparte, sister of the First Consul, Napoleon Bonaparte. They were married the same year as we were, in 1800.

As the Revolution is over, and as we have an influential uncle in France, mama thinks that it is the right time to return home, especially since she has very little left to live on in Boston.

Father Sigogne has also brought other changes. A bell from Port Royal, silent for over fifty years, has a temporary belfry over the one and only door of the church. This bell has been handed to Father Sigogne by Jacob Troop of Annapolis.

This is the story going around about this bell. The Acadians of Pointe-a-Doucet, near Port-Royal, on learning about the fate of Grand Pre in those tragic days of 1755, took their money to the village priest for safe-keeping. The latter put this money in the bell of the little chapel, after having taken it down from the Belfry. He then buried it at night. The very next day, he was arrested by the English and taken as a prisoner to Halifax. He never was able to let his parishioners know the hiding place of the treasure. It was not long before the latter were seized and deported everywhere, never to return.

About twenty years later a colonist from New England, Jacob Troop, found a bell while plowing his field. He never admitted having found the money but his neighbours maintain that he lived a few years without working and that his plow remained for many years on the spot where it struck the bell. At any rate, when this Jacob Troop heard of the arrival of Father Sigogne, he brought the bell to him. A very noble gesture on his part, I must say.

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The last Sunday of August 1801:

Today a strange incident has troubled the peace and happiness which prevails in the parish since the arrival of Father Sigogne. Before beginning mass this morning, the good Father turned toward the people and said very solemnly:

“I ask Casimir LeBlanc to leave the choir.”

And so my “papa” who is the choir master, still wearing the white surplice and with his big hymn book, left the choir, and retired to the back of the little church, from where he continued to direct the singing as if nothing had happened.

When I asked Casimir what had happened between the two, he said he had words with Father Sigogne about the fence that separates our land from that of the parish.

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The first Sunday of September, 1801:

Today when I arrived at church. I found Casimir at the door in a white surplice and still carrying his big hymn book, ready to direct the choir from a distance. I found this terrible but he did not seem disturbed over it at all.

Before intoning the "Asperges me", Father Sigogne turned to the faithful and said:

"I invite Casimir LeBlanc to return to the choir."

Without saying a word and without showing the least emotion, my "papa" returned to take his place in the choir and led the faithful, singing the "Asperges me".

It seems the difficulty was cleared up during the week, the good Father admitting he was wrong.

I asked Casimir how he could have remained so calm during the whole affair. He simply replied:

"It is always easy to do one's duty."

* * * * *

November 22, 1802:

It is now twenty-two years since I first saw the light of day and now I have a husband and two babies, Armand, who is a little over a year, and Rose, who is only ten days old.

We had Rose baptized today. Casimir and Martha LeBlanc, my foster parents, are her god-parents. We had to wait those ten days because Father Sigogne was away in the parish of Cape Sable, which includes all the Acadian settlements south of Cape Fourchu, that the English call Yarmouth.

He only came back today. How tired he appeared from his voyage and no doubt, also affected by the quarrel which rages in the parish of Saint Mary over the construction of a new church.

The present church is falling in ruins and we just have to rebuild. The question is to determine where to rebuild. The people from Meteghan and people from Grosses Coques and Anse des LeBlanc do not want to agree. The former want the new church built nearer to them and the latter will rebel if the new church is built farther away from them.

Never was the parish so divided and everyone seems to blame Father Sigogne for it, although he is completely innocent of favoritism for one side or the other.

The people from Meteghan have even begun to build their own church at Meteghan River. Hearing this, Father Sigogne lost all patience and excluded them from the sacraments. No one knows how it will all end.

June 3, 1803:

It seems that all the people along Saint Mary's Bay and from "Up the Bay" (1) were at the "Point". I went there myself with my two babies. We even ate there while awaiting for the great event that was to come.

Around one o'clock, a white speck appeared off Cape Saint-Mary. We anxiously watched its progress, and in a few more hours the little fishing boat from Tusket-Wedge landed at the beach and Monseigneur Denaut, bishop of Quebec, stepped out on the gravel.

At a signal from Father Sigogne, we all knelt on the beach to receive the benediction of the first bishop to come to Saint-Mary's Bay.

(1) "Up the Bay" the people of Church Point referred to points beyond Weymouth as "Up the Bay".

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June 4, 1803:

I was among the four hundred and two persons who received the sacrament of Confirmation from the hands of Monseigneur Denaut. There were there people of all ages, including old white-haired men and women. Casimir and Martha LeBlanc acted as god-parents for everybody, for only they had been confirmed before.

June 8, 1803:

Casimir left today with Father Sigogne to take Monseigneur Denaut to Halifax through the Annapolis Valley. It is marvellous to see the effect of the bishop's visit in the region. The difficulty over the new church has been resolved. It will be built on the main highway here, and as soon as possible the people at Meteghan will build a church of their own.

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June 8, 1806:

Today is the Sunday in the Octave of the feast of the Blessed Sacrament and we had a procession. This time there was a chapel set up near the foundation of the new

church being built on the east side of the "King's Highway". After the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Father Sigogne blessed the corner stone of the new church. In this stone there is a new coin with the date 1806 on it.

* * * * *

June 9, 1806:

I can see the frame work of the new church going up. All the men of the "French Shore" are working on it. They came yesterday for the procession and remained to contribute their day's work today. Every house in the village was filled up last night.

We were not able to put up as many people as we wanted because the little house is quite full with our little family. We have had two additions since I opened these pages the last time. They have been baptized Marie and Joseph.

The work on the new church is under the direction of Frederick Belliveau.

* * * * *

May 1, 1808:

Today I left my five children with "mama" LeBlanc. Yes, I have five now. Another has been born since the last time I have darkened these pages. (It is another boy named Pierre, after my deceased father). After having kissed them all we went, Janie and I, to the blessing of the new Saint Mary's Church.

At nine o'clock all the parishioners gathered at the old church on the Point and which we always feared would fall upon us. Father Sigogne gave to each of us some object to carry and we formed a procession to the new church. I carried the altar cloth, Janie took the missal.

December 26, 1810:

What a merry Christmas we had yesterday! My little family is my greatest joy, especially when I see my little children, cheeks reddened by the wind and the cold, returning from mass with their father. I had to stay home with my very little ones. For me, those are the nicest Christmas presents.

The English custom of giving gifts at Christmas, and of having a big Christmas dinner with a fattened goose, seems to take on more and more popularity with us. We have had it this year.

Father Sigogne brings us happiness materially and spiritually. It is probably the most prosperous Christmas we've had. The harvest has been good. Our cellar has everything which the people around here say is required to get through the winter: a barrel of pork, a barrel of corn beef, a barrel of salt herring, a quintal of salt cod, two crocks of butter, a bin full of potatoes, a bin full of turnips, a crock of salted cucumbers, a sac full of dried beans, one of dried peas, one of dried blueberries, a crock of pickled beets, corn cobs hanging from the rafters, bags of wheat and oats in the "grenier". (the unfinished upstairs of the house) a barrel of flour and a barrel of cornmeal, strings of blood puddings hanging from the floor joists in the cellar and a crock of headcheese, together with ten jugs of cider, and bottles of beet wine, raspberry wine, blackberry wine, dandelion wine, and a keg of juniper beer.

This year we have money on hand, as they say. The "French Shore", as the English call the area from Salmon River to Weymouth, is a hive of activity. Casimir says that England is at war with France and needs ships and lumber.

No region is better situated for ship-building than Saint Mary's Bay, with its numerous sheltered coves and its great forests reaching to the water's edge.

In every cove there is a shipyard and on every stream there is a saw mill driven by a waterwheel. We are selling large quantities of timber for which we are paid in pounds and shillings, and not by barter as had been the custom up to now.

Money has been very scarce around here, since these people have returned from exile to these inhospitable shores. People had to get used to getting along without it, and they did. For example the Acadian housewife makes all her clothes and those of her family with yard goods that her husband obtains from the English merchants at Weymouth for his lumber or his farm products, butter, eggs and potatoes. The husband makes the mocassins for the whole family from hides that he tans himself. He makes all the household furniture. Soap is homemade also. We take the ashes of hardwood, put them in a barrel with holes in the bottom; straw is spread over the bottom to prevent the ashes from flowing out. Water is poured on

these ashes and the residue which falls in the pan below the barrel forms lye which we then mix with animal fat to make the soap which we use.

Sugar, salt, spice, tamarin, we get from our trade with the West Indies in exchange for our lumber. Some also get rum by the same means of barter. We make our own wines. Here is how we make our raspberry wine:

We put about six quarts of raspberries in a two gallon earthen crock. Stir it three times a day for three weeks. We squeeze out the juice and add sugar and allow to ferment for ten days, and then we put in bottles and we let it stand for a year.

Some Acadians have now begun to carry on trade themselves and they prove very adept at it. For example, they cut wood on their land, saw it in their own mill, build a ship with it, load it with their own lumber, sail to the West Indies and sell it, both the cargo and the ship, at a good profit. Then they return and begin all over again.

* * * * *

June 19, 1812:

Here I am alone with my seven little children. I should not say alone, for Casimir and Martha LeBlanc are still with me. But Janie is gone away, and I feel lonely in spite of the fact that I work from sunrise to sunset and beyond, to keep my little family dressed and fed.

My dear Janie has gone to Digby with the Militia commanded by Colonel Anselme Doucet. We are now at war with our neighbours, the United States. Nobody seems to know exactly why, not even the Americans, Casimir tells me. He has learned this last detail from his friends in Philadelphia. However, good citizens that they are, our Acadians have gone to the defense of Digby. It seems that enemy ships were seen in the area. In the meantime we are waiting patiently.

Casimir says that Napoleon is still master of Europe but a slave to his pride. Uncle Joachim is now king of Naples. Imagine, a king in our family! However, that will make no difference to us here. We will keep on living as before.

August 15, 1812:

My dear Janie is back without injury. An American vessel has been captured, and our militiamen have returned to harvest the hay crop which would have been lost.

* * * * *

November 22, 1812:

War continues in Europe and privateers linger off our coasts. Luckily, they have not threatened us yet. However, Father Sigogne brings us news from his parish at Tusket (Sainte Anne du Ruisseau) that there have been several encounters with these pirates over there.

On October 8, Father Sigogne tells us, one of his parishioners, Francois Clermont, known as Sauge, who lived with his wife and nine children on isolated Sheep Island in Tusket Bay, saw an unknown ship drop anchor off his island, and a boatload of evil-looking men came ashore. Seeing this, Sauge took his musket and came out, taking a position to the side of the house, behind a clump of bushes. Apparently he did not conceal himself well enough. He was taken and summarily shot in cold blood. The pirates then entered the house and ramsacked it from top to bottom. Even the baby in the cradle was dumped on the floor. Then they went out, killed the pig, and took it to the ship. Night was falling then and the poor family was left all alone with their dead father.

Father Sigogne appeals to all his faithful to help this poor family which has been so cruel struck by this senseless war. We shall all help them, for here the misfortune of one is felt by all.

1. According to Beamish Murdock, Volume III page 333, this ship was later captured by the Shannon, and Sauge's murderer was identified as the first lieutenant.

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November 22, 1813:

I always try to make an entry on my birthday for I began this diary on my birthday. This year there is another blessed event to record. On November 11, a little angel came to us. We baptized her Marguerite-Sophie, the name of my youngest sister, whom we always called "Soukie". I hope to always keep this one with me; I feel it will be so, God willing.

October 21, 1814:

We are very concerned about our poor dear Casimir. He is very weak today and we fear that he won't be with us much longer.

For many months he had been afflicted with a sore leg. He had broken this leg, and it never seemed to heal properly.

Francois Bourneuf, a young man who has recently arrived from France, and came to see Casimir, took one look at this leg and sent for a doctor who lives at Port-Royal. When this doctor came he found traces of gangrene and to save the old man, now eighty-four, he advised removing the leg.

Yesterday was the appointed day. The doctor came with Francois Bourneuf, who volunteered to assist him.

Before the operation Casimir ate a good meal. After he had prepared himself and invoked God to give him courage, he said: "Doctor, begin your work, I'm ready if you are".

At the first stroke of the scalpel, Francois fainted and had to be carried from the room. After that, whatever help the doctor got came from Casimir himself. He never complained of the pain except during the sawing of the bone.

Poor Francois! He seemed so embarrassed and would have liked to get away as soon as possible, but his great concern for Casimir made him remain beside the old man all day.

From what we know about this Francois, he has had a very exciting and interesting young life. He first came to this country against his will, having been taken prisoner when his ship was captured at sea and brought to Halifax. He escaped from prison at Halifax and made his way to Pubnico, thence came to Grosses Coques, where he is now staying with the family of Francois Gilly, who have adopted him in the same way that the LeBlanc's have adopted me. He taught school for a year. Armand, Rose, and Marie have been inspired by his teaching.

Mrs. Gilly, Mr. and Mrs. Joppe LeBlanc and Francois Bourneuf spent the evening with Casimir and Mrs. LeBlanc.

November 22, 1814:

Today is my thirty-fourth birthday. How time flies! However these have been most happy years.

War is over between the United States and England. We hear also that Napoleon is in exile on the island of Elba. We have had no news about our family, mama, my sisters, and my uncle Joachim, the king of Naples.

France has been at war continuously since we last heard from all of them. May God preserve them, but I fear greatly.

1. Joachim Murat was overthrown with the first downfall of Napoleon, in 1814. When Napoleon returned to power for one hundred days, Joachim made an attempt to recapture his throne. The attempt failed and he was taken prisoner at Pizzo and shot.

* * * * *

November 22, 1815:

Up to now, Casimir and I have tried to teach the children. But with housework and the care of babies, who have been arriving quite regularly, I had to neglect the schooling of my dear little ones, as also I had to neglect this diary.

However we do have a school master in the village now, a Monsieur Bunet, who is from France or St. Pierre; nobody seems to know for sure, and he is somewhat reluctant to speak of his activities before arriving here.

1. It seems Mr. "Bunet's" or "Bunel's" (we find two spellings of his name) reticence was justified. He had been convicted of theft at St. Pierre's and whipped. This information is contained in Francois Bourneuf's memoirs.

June 24, 1816:

This is a great day for us. It is the feast of the patron saint of my dear Jean-Baptiste (Janie) and yesterday I received a letter from my mother. I cherish it so much that I will stick it to this page.

* * * * *

TRANSLATION OF LETTER

Bayonne, March 24, 1816

Dear Cecile:

Since 1803 when I wrote you the first letter telling you about my unexpected departure (from Boston) and my return to France, I wrote you many others which did not have any more success (in reaching you) than the

first, so I do not know if either you or Mr. and Mrs. Casimir are still living.

It is possible that my letters had not reached you because of the troubled state of affairs due to the war which prevented ships from leaving or reaching France. But now I may hope that this one will reach you, and that you will not neglect the first occasion to let me know your dear news. After receiving yours, I would still long to receive some from Soukie who is married in Jamaica, and to see you both and to hug and kiss you.

I must tell you that Polley has been married for a year, and ten days ago gave birth to the loveliest little girl that you ever saw. Your sister Fanny is still single. She is in good health and so am I, apart from the anxiety which I always feel for your safety and that of your benefactors, whose great age and the calamities of the recent war make me fear for their existence. If you do lose them and are in want, book passage aboard the first ship that you can find and come to your mother's arms which long to hold you, and I will then have the pleasure of having my oldest daughter by my side. At any rate, be sure to write, give me that satisfaction and then I will write you more at length.

If Mr. and Mrs. Casimir are still living, embrace them for me many times and double your care for them in gratitude for all they have done for you, for the care you have received from such good people cannot be repaid. I pray you to give them our most sincere respect and sympathy.

I close, embracing you with all my heart; and so do your sisters. I remain forever your loving mother.

Francoise Murat

at St. Esprit — Bayonne.

Address my letters in care of Mr. Ripar, Ship Chandler,

* * * * *

Another great day for us! We had the second visit of a bishop. This time it was Monsignor Plessis of Quebec. Hundreds received confirmation and among these were Armand, Rose, Marie, Joseph and Pierre.

Monsignor has also visited the site of the new church at Meteghan and has decreed that it should be consecrated to Saint Mande, no doubt in honour of Father Jean-Mande Sigogne.

November 22, 1817:

This year, we obtained more land. The district of Clare was increased by 36,000 acres and the Melansons obtained lots in this new grant of land. This new "concession" or grant is ten miles back of Concessions and named Corberrie, the name of the region where Father Sigogne was born.

On November 6, we went to the blessing of the new church at Meteghan.

I should not have gone, for I am still weak from the birth of Madeleine and the road is very rough.

I hope that when the time comes to divide the parish of Meteghan, it will not give rise to the disputes that preceded the division of Saint Mary's.

* * * * *

November 22, 1819:

How I neglect this poor diary! Alas it's two years since the last entry! But my growing children allow me little time to do anything but to feed and clothe them, and also to try to teach them something.

It is true that there is a school of sorts at Little Brook, where Monsieur Brunet pretends to teach, but it seems that he and his pupils often take long siestas. Father Sigogne himself teaches them catechism and the Bible. But, all in all, our poor little children get little education. It is not surprising that so many do not know how to read and write.

Last year we had another boy, Augustin, and this year a girl, Rosalie. They are all in good health and growing like weeds.

* * * * *

November 22, 1820:

I absolutely wanted to make this entry today, for it is my birthday and I am now forty. However it is only by chance that I'm able to write this for this dear little book was found among the few items we could salvage from the great fire which will forever haunt our memories.

I'm writing this in the house of Frederick Belliveau one of two houses which were still standing after the fire which ravaged the French Shore, beginning on Sept. 12.

This fire began innocently enough in the woods at Little Brook, about two miles south of the church. Then came a strong south west wind, which often prevails in

this area. In a few hours the fire was out of control, carrying all before it.

Seeing the fire approaching rapidly, Janie yoked the oxen to the cart, we carried in Casimir, now an invalid, and our dear little Rosalie and the baby. Janie took the whip and we started for the large dunes about two miles from here. I used an alder switch to hurry along our three cows and twenty sheep. We were joined by other families, with crying women and children and shouting men, bawling cattle, bleating sheep and barking dogs. It was like a second expulsion.

When we passed Frederick Belliveau's house, built three years ago, Frederick himself was leaving. He made the sign of the cross on the door and said: "God keep the house, the fire may take the rest."

After this he joined us, taking only what he could carry on his person. His family had already fled.

The fire was gaining mercilessly on us, going much faster than our cattle and our children. We took to the shore. From there we could see this wall of fire advancing upon our village on a four mile front. The roar of the flames was deafening and the heat unbearable even where we were on the shore. We could see one house after another engulfed by this red tide as you see the rocks of the shore disappear under the rising sea. We thought it was the end of the world!

It continued all day but at night a welcomed rain-storm put out the fire before it reached Belliveau's Cove. In all eighteen houses and twenty-three barns burned, and also the church and the glebehouse.

Father Sigogne had tried to save the church by having all his household carry water to keep the walls wet. It was not long before they realized it was useless, and that they should all flee for their lives. Gatien, his adopted son, yoked the oxen, while Father Sigogne entered the church to gather the sacred objects. Absorbed with this task, he almost tarried too long. Red hot embers carried by the wind fell on the roof which immediately burst into flames and rapidly collapsed. He hardly escaped in time and was badly burned. However, the sacred vestments and the chalice and books were saved and taken to the old chapel on the Point which was not immediately menaced by the flames. After the fire was over, the good Father fell ill, and he was cared for by the family of Pierre LeBlanc, whose house also escaped the disaster.

There was only one loss of life. It was one too many, however. This is how it happened. For some years now, an old negro lived in a miserable shack near the church. He did not want to follow the rest of us and so we let him remain in a spot which we thought safe. Unfortunately, it was not. He was surrounded by the fire and we found his remains later. We shall never know where he came from and why he had come to Church Point.

This disaster has made us realize how little material things really count, and that what really counts is the goodness and charity of people. The people of Grosses-Coques, Beliveau's Cove and Meteghan have shared their homes with us. The government sent us right away, bedding and clothes, beds and building material. Everything that we needed immediately. In a few days a fund of one hundred pounds sterling was made available to us.

I believe that the vilage will rise quickly from its ashes. Already, the charred tree trunks are being cut and, in the spring, they will be sawn into building material and we will start building again. Father Sigogne is also planning a larger and more beautiful church.

We owe an eternal gratitude to Frederick Belliveau and his family for having received us under his roof. (1) It must be Divine Providence that has preserved them for that.

(1) Frederick Belliveau's house became the home of Cecile's grand-daughter, Marie Stuart, who married Jean Blaise Belliveau, grand-son of Frederick, also known as "Tickine". This Marie Stuart Belliveau died in 1945. She had been born in 1844 and baptized by Father Sigogne.

* * * * *

THE LAST ENTRY:

Casimir LeBlanc has left us for his eternal reward in his ninety-sixth year. He will rejoin Martha who passed away on September 17th, 1816. Thus disappears my great benefactors who deserve the gratitude of all the French Shore, for their charity knew no limit.

We ourselves we owe to them all we have. Casimir helped us greatly during his lifetime, and now we inherit all he accumulated.

It is fitting that this is the last page of this book and should be dedicated to him who made it possible.

PROLOGUE

After the passing of the LeBlanc's, Cecile asked her daughter, Marguerite-Sophie and her husband, James V. Stuart, to leave Marshalltown, where they had settled after their marriage, and to come and live with her at Church Point.

The young couple accepted the offer and came back to Church Point.

As Janie and Cecile Melanson's home was no longer adequate, James Stuart constructed a new house near the church. It is in this house, that now lives Jacques Stuart, James' grandson.

Cecile also learned about the death of her mother, Françoise Murat, at Bayonne, France. This news profoundly afflicted Cecile and she went daily to church to pray for her. A few months after Françoise's death, Cecile learned that she inherited a part of her mother's property. But she never received her share, however, for she would have to go to Halifax to claim it and, at her age, it would have been very difficult.

Cecile saw her sons and daughters married, except Armand the oldest and Remi, who died at sea from yellow fever.

Cecile passed her last days with Jean-Baptiste (Janie) and Marguerite-Sophie and her husband. Jean-Baptiste passed away first and a few days later, Cecile followed him to her eternal reward, March 23, 1855.

THE END

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